

within a distance of about 30 m from them. The birds which had strayed into the bajra field perfectly camouflaged with the crop. We could spot another pair, in all four birds. Two were smaller than the others, leading to infer, they were a pair each, male and female. As we got closer to them we could clearly see their majestic, almost martial stride, with their conspicuous black-crested crowns, swivelling right and left, looking out warily for the intruder. As we got closer to them, within a range of about 30 m they took off in the air, almost instinctively, flapping their wings rhythmically.

Though the common vernacular name of the bird is 'maldhok', it is locally known as: "kaldhok" or "kuldhokmane". The villagers informed us, that Babulkheda fields and grasslands are permanent habitat of the birds and

that they are also come across in the neighbouring villages of Salbatpur, and Jalka. They estimate a population of about ten birds in this tract.

The natural habitat of the bird, is very much disturbed with cultivation perniciously making inroads into grasslands and the shrubby vegetal growth being cleared in the process. Continual human traffic too, as a result of the spread of cultivation all round, also comes in the way of safe and sheltered habitat for the birds. The fringe of grassland interspersed with cultivation and shrubby growth, on either side of the river Godavari between Vaijapur and Salbatpur (about 1500 sq. km.) both in Aurangabad and Ahmednagar districts, could be considered for protection and development, as available habitat for the vanishing Great Indian Bustard in Maharashtra.

CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS,  
AURANGABAD CIRCLE,  
AURANGABAD, (M.S.),  
November 27, 1978.

L. H. A. REGO

11. ON THE TAXONOMIC VALIDITY OF THE SOUTH INDIAN  
BLACKHEADED ORIOLE, *ORIOIUS XANTHORNIUS*  
*MADERASPATANUS* FRANKLIN (AVES: ORIOIIDAE)

(With a text-figure)

During the course of a faunistic survey in Andhra Pradesh in 1978, I collected a female specimen of *Oriolus xanthornus maderaspatanus* Franklin on 22 February from Kotapalli, c 48 km north-east of Mancheri, Adilabad district, Andhra Pradesh. Its measurements are: Wing 144, tail 87, and bill 30 mm.

The south Indian population of the Black-headed Oriole was separated from *Oriolus xanthornus xanthornus* Linnaeus, 1758, as *Oriolus xanthornus maderaspatanus* by Frank-

lin, 1831, on the basis of yellow markings on inner secondaries and tertiaries being reduced to terminal spots. Baker (1926) considers the whole population of Indian Black-headed Oriole under one subspecies, *Oriolus xanthornus xanthornus*. Biswas (1947) also treated *maderaspatanus* as a synonym of *xanthornus*, since he found that the yellow markings are very variable and not a constant character. Rand & Fleming (1957) while studying the birds from Nepal, commented that the

TABLE 1

Assam	6	7	8
5 ♂	20.00-22.00 (21.00)	20.00-23.00 (21.40)	19.00-24.00 (20.80)
Tripura			
1 ♂	26.00	26.00	25.00
West Bengal			
6 ♂	19.00-26.00 (23.00)	20.00-28.00 (23.50)	20.00-32.00 (23.00)
1 ♀	19.00	18.00	20.00
1 ?	21.00	24.00	25.00
Bihar			
4 ♂	16.00-24.00 (19.00)	18.00-24.00 (21.50)	16.00-23.00 (20.25)
1 ♀	27.00	23.00	22.00
2 ?	21.00-23.00 (22.00)	18.00-22.00 (20.00)	18.00-23.00 (20.50)
Uttar Pradesh			
2 ♂	19.00-23.00 (21.00)	23.00-25.00 (24.00)	25.00 (25.00)
1 ?	29.00	29.00	31.00
Orissa			
6 ♂	15.00-22.00 (18.00)	12.00-20.00 (16.00)	9.00-17.00 (14.00)
5 ♀	15.00-27.00 (22.00)	15.00-27.00 (22.00)	15.00-24.00 (20.00)
Madhya Pradesh			
4 ♂	11.00-17.00 (14.50)	12.00-17.00 (14.25)	11.00-16.00 (12.50)
Andhra Pradesh			
1 ♂	11.00	11.00	12.00
Maharashtra			
7 ♂	9.00-11.00 (7.00)	10.00-14.00 (11.14)	10.00-15.00 (11.85)
Goa			
1 ♂	11.00	10.00	10.00
Tamil Nadu			
1 ♀	9.00	9.00	7.00
2 ?	8.00-10.00 (9.00)	8.00-10.00 (9.00)	7.00-10.00 (8.50)
Kerala			
2 ♂	10.00-11.00 (10.50)	10.00-11.00 (10.50)	9.00-11.00 (10.00)
1 ?	10.00	10.00	10.00

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

validity of *maderaspatanus* of peninsular India was questionable. Ali & Ripley (1972, p. 110, note) while admitting *maderaspatanus* stand that the 'subspecies is considered questionable by some authors'.

An attempt has, therefore, been made to review the taxonomic status of *Oriolus xanthornus maderaspatanus* on the basis of the material present at the Zoological Survey of India. The differences of measurements (in mm) of yellow spots on secondaries 6, 7 and 8 (from outside) between the populations from northern and southern India are given in Table 1 (averages in parenthesis).

From the table 1 the difference in the sizes of the yellow spots on three secondaries between the northern and southern populations appears quite clear, although a very small number of specimens exhibit some variations which may possibly be only individual variations. The accompanying sketch showing yellow spots on the secondaries of the two populations also make the issue quite clear (fig. 1).

On the basis of the data presented above, I believe (Ali and Ripley 1972) are justified in recognizing *maderaspatanus* as a distinct subspecies.

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ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA,  
INDIAN MUSEUM,  
CALCUTTA 700 016,  
January 7, 1978.

N. MAJUMDAR

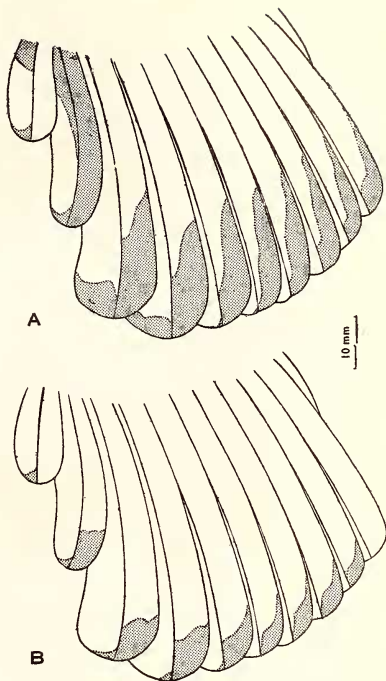


Fig. 1. Secondary wing feathers of *Oriolus xanthornus* showing the extent of yellow spots on the 6th, 7th and 8th feathers. A. North Indian population; B. South Indian population.

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12. ON THE VALIDITY OF *DENDROCITTA FORMOSAE SARKARI*  
KINNEAR & WHISTLER

In the course of the Vernay Scientific Survey of the Eastern Ghats held during 1929-30, seven specimens of the Himalayan Tree Pie (*Dendrocitta formosae*) were obtained in the Vizagapatam Hills and separated as *Dendrocitta formosae sarkari* by Kinnear & Whistler (1930, Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl. 51 p. 17).

It was referred to again in the course of the Eastern Ghats Report (*JBNHS* 35 p. 517) as differing from the form in the Eastern Himalayas (now *D. f. himalayensis* Blyth).

Biswas 1964, *JBNHS* 60: 650-1 measured three paratypes of *sarkari* (2 ♂♂ 1 ♀) and compared them with a large series (30 ♂♂ 20 ♀♀ 32 o?) from Eastern (*himalayensis* Blyth) and Western (*occidentalis* Ticehurst) Himalayas. Noting the slight overlap in the measurements he expressed the opinion that *sarkari* was synonymous with *himalayensis*. This has been accepted in IND. HANDBOOK (5: 226).

In the course of cataloguing the Bombay Natural History Society collection, I have examined 9 specimens, 2 from the original series from Anantagiri, Vizagapatam Hills, and 7 fresh specimens collected by Sâlim Ali at Berbera, Puri, and Mahendragiri, all in Orissa.

While the average measurements are not very different, in series they are strikingly smaller than both *occidentalis* and *himalayensis*, and the range of measurements is also very different.

The wing and tail measurements decline from the north-west (*occidentalis*) through Eastern Himalayas (*himalayensis*) to Orissa and the Vizagapatam Hills (*sarkari*). The measurements overlap with those of the adjoining race, the only consistent difference being the acquirement of a larger wing and tail, both by *occidentalis*, as compared to *himalayensis*, and the latter as compared with *sarkari*.

In the first two, the distribution is contiguous and they no doubt form a cline. The southern birds are, however, isolated and of those examined, the largest wing is 143 mm., bill 23.7 and tail 207.

It is generally overlooked that the bird was described only for its smaller bill. When viewed sideways, it is much smaller than in any of the others and the width at the nostrils never exceeds 11 mm., while it is always more in the others.

On these differences, I think that *sarkari* is a good race and deserves to be retained.